

Submission

No 68

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT ACCOMMODATION IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Name: Mr Ryan Ho

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Dear Vicki Buchbach,
Mr Troy GRANT (Nat, LA Member)
Ms Sonia HORNER (ALP, LA Member)
Mr Bruce NOTLEY-SMITH (Lib, LA Member)
Mr John SIDOTI (Lib, LA Member)
Ms Anna WATSON (ALP, LA Member),

I am Ryan Ho, who had present few minutes talk on your hearing in Ryde today.

As you are aware, I have mentioned that student accommodation or affordable housing is not a unique issue, it is almost a global issue, shared accommodation is widely practiced among those G20 countries... so it is going to be a very sensible issue if we can develop a better policy to contain the issue. It is also can be a plus or minus policy to Australia as a whole because we are a country with a brand of Australia which gives fair and quality and value for money.

I had also mentioned a policy adopted by a local government of WHITEHORSE in Victoria, it is called [Shared-Accommodation-Housing], and I had copied the links underneath and hopefully it can facilitate your formation of the report and recommendations.

[http://community.sbs.com.au/lata/blog/2011/06/01/let%E2%80%99s have an honest discussion about boarding houses and student accommodation in ryde](http://community.sbs.com.au/lata/blog/2011/06/01/let%E2%80%99s%20have%20an%20honest%20discussion%20about%20boarding%20houses%20and%20student%20accommodation%20in%20ryde)

<http://www.whitehorse.vic.gov.au/Shared-Accommodation-Housing.html>

Shared Accommodation Housing

With a significant student population in the City of Whitehorse, there has been increased demand for shared accommodation housing such as rooming/boarding houses, residential accommodation, student dormitories and hostels.

Owners must comply with laws that aim to protect public health and safety. This includes meeting Council's building, health and planning requirements.

Building Regulation Requirements

Shared accommodation with a floor area of no more than 300m² and no more than 12 residents is classified as a Class 1b building by the Building Code of Australia (BCA). When an owner changes the use of their home from Class 1a (a single dwelling) to Class 1b, they must obtain a building permit and ensure that essential safety measures are maintained.

Unauthorised Conversion of Buildings

Unauthorised conversion of a building (converting a building from Class 1a to Class 1b) may constitute an offence which can be prosecuted by Council or the police. It may also lead to danger to residents due to inadequate fire protection or sub-standard conditions.

Essential Building Safety Measures

Smoke Alarm Installation Requirements

Owners must install a stand-alone, hard-wired smoke alarm in or near the ceiling in every bedroom and every hallway associated with a bedroom. If there is no corridor or hallway, a smoke alarm must be installed in any area between the bedrooms and the remainder of the building. The smoke alarms must meet the Australian Standard AS 3786 or AS1670.1. The

smoke alarm must be connected to the building's 240 volt power mains as well as having a battery back-up.

Smoke alarms should be installed on or near the ceiling with special care being taken to avoid dead air spaces. A dead air space is an area in which trapped hot air will prevent smoke from reaching the alarm. This space generally occurs at the apex of cathedral ceilings, the corner junction of walls and ceilings, between exposed floor joists etc. In normal ceilings, this means locating the smoke alarm at least 300mm from any corner.

Emergency Lighting Requirements

Owners must install smoke alarm activated lighting in accordance with BCA Clause 3.7.2.5 to assist evacuation of occupants in the event of fire. The lighting can be incorporated in the smoke alarm units or activated by operation of nearby smoke alarms.

Fire Extinguisher Requirements

It is recommended that owners install an A 2A:20B:E Dry Chemical fire extinguisher in the kitchen in accordance with AS2444. The fire extinguisher must be placed in an obvious and easy-to-reach position with no obstructions or hazards in the way of occupants. It should be mounted at a height of not more than 1200mm from floor level.

Fire Blanket Requirements

Owners should ensure that a fire blanket is kept in an easy-to-reach location close to the cooking area. Fire blankets are manufactured to AS/NZS 3504 in a rectangular or square shape and are available in sizes between 0.9 m × 0.9 m and 1.8 m × 1.8 m.

Fire safety equipment must be located in appropriate locations with signage and in accordance with relevant standards and clearly detailed in building permit drawings.

Exit Doors

Exit doors must be maintained and clear of all obstructions at all times. The paths must be maintained in an efficient condition and kept readily accessible, functional and clear of obstruction to ensure safe and fast exiting from the building in the case of an emergency. Deadlocks are generally prohibited on required exit doors. Consideration may be given to permitting a deadlock if the deadlock installed has no provision for internal locking by a key (see Lockwood 002 Deadlatch range or similar). A lever handle is preferable.

Swimming Pool Fencing

If a pool is provided for tenants the swimming pool safety barrier must comply with the Building Code of Australia, AS1926.1 and AS1926.2 and be maintained in accordance with Building Regulations.

Emergency Evacuation Procedures

In some cases Council may ask for an Emergency Evacuation Procedure, or 'Fire Orders' to be developed and displayed throughout the building, including on the inside of each bedroom door.

Toilet, Bathing and Laundry Facilities

At least one toilet, one bath or shower and one wash basin for every 10 persons must be provided for persons occupying the accommodation. Laundry provision must be provided. These areas must have suitable water resistant floor surfaces.

Maintenance of Exits

Owners and occupiers are both responsible for the maintenance of exits and paths of travel to exits. The paths must be maintained in an efficient condition and kept readily accessible, functional and clear of obstruction to ensure safe and fast exiting from the building in the case of an emergency. Note: deadlocks are prohibited on required exit doors.

Light and Ventilation

All habitable rooms, including bedrooms must be provided with adequate light and ventilation. As a guide, all rooms must have a window to provide light that is 10% of the total floor area and ventilation in the form of an openable section of the window of 5% of the total floor area.

Other Items to Consider to Increase Safety

The following items are not compulsory but should owners should consider them to improve the safety of tenants:

Provide interconnecting smoke alarms so that if one alarm sounds then the other alarms are also activated adding an enhanced level of safety.

Smoking within rooms presents a fire risk and should be discouraged.

Cooking within rooms must be prohibited. All cooking must be conducted in the kitchen amenities.

Electrical switchboards should be upgraded and safety switches provided for all general power and lighting circuits.

If portable heating devices are provided they should be secured in position or provided with mercury type safety cut-off switches.

Gas appliances should be provided with automatic flame failure, which cuts off in the event of flame extinguishment.

Adequate power points should be provided to reduce overloading of power boards.

Consideration should be given to treating upholstered furnishings, mattresses, curtains, etc with a flame retardant to minimise the risk of ignition.

Regular inspections of the property undertaken to ensure paths of travel to exits are maintained and clear of obstructions.

Public Health Requirements

The Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2009 aim to prevent overcrowding in prescribed accommodation, ensure reasonable standards of hygiene, sanitation and maintenance, and reduce the risk of communicable diseases.

Registration

Shared accommodation in Whitehorse must be registered with Council where there are four or more occupants in the case of rooming/boarder houses and six or more in the case of residential accommodation. Once registered, Council conducts annual inspections to ensure that minimum standards are met as set out under the Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2009.

An application for registration of prescribed accommodation must:

Include a plan of the premises drawn to a scale of not less than 1:100 and showing the proposed use of each room

Be accompanied by the fee determined by Council.

Overcrowding

Owners/proprietors must comply with regulations in relation to the maximum number of people permitted to reside in each bedroom. A room must not be permitted to be used as a bedroom if it has a floor area of less than 7.5 square metres.

If people are accommodated for a period of more than 31 days the maximum number of people permitted to occupy a bedroom is:

One person: 7.5m² (minimum floor area)

Two people: 12m² (minimum floor area)

Additional person for every four square metres of floor area that exceeds 12 square metres.

Maintenance

All bedrooms, toilets, bathrooms, laundries, kitchens, living rooms and any common areas provided with the accommodation must be maintained in good working order; in a clean, sanitary and hygienic condition and in a good state of repair.

Water Supply

A continuous and adequate supply of water must be provided to all toilet, bathing, kitchen, laundry and drinking water facilities and hot water to all bathing, laundry and kitchen facilities.

Toilet and Bathing Facilities

At least one toilet, one bath or shower and one wash basin for every 10 persons must be provided for persons occupying the accommodation.

Register of Occupants

A register recording names and addresses of persons occupying the accommodation and dates of their arrival and departure must be retained for at least 12 months after the date of the last entry in the register.

Planning Requirements

A planning permit is required for use of shared accommodation where there are 10 or more habitable rooms. A habitable room is defined as any room of a residential building other than a bathroom, laundry, toilet, pantry, walk-in wardrobe, corridor, or other space of a specialised nature occupied infrequently.

Compliance

Where Council becomes aware of shared accommodation facilities that breach building, health and planning laws, Council will coordinate investigation and enforcement activities to achieve compliance. This includes conversions to Class 1b building use without being suitably upgraded or granted necessary permits or registrations (where applicable).

Council would initially seek to work with owners/proprietors to achieve compliance. However, where necessary, Council may use a number of enforcement options available. This includes issuing of orders/notices to upgrade safety measures of the building, prohibit

occupation and remedy any breaches of standards under the Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations and the Planning Scheme.

Council may also serve an infringement notice for offences, including operating unregistered.

General

Following are a list of things likely to make the shared accommodation a safer and more pleasant place for residents to live.

The accommodation should have:

Communal food preparation area with sink, stove and fridge

Laundry facilities including a clothesline

Good external and common area lighting.

Each room should have:

A minimum of two power outlets

Adequate ventilation and light

Heating or appropriate allowances for portable heating

Window coverings to keep light out and provide privacy

I am glad to get involved with such kind of process and if you have any query, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Ryan
3/11/11